Case Study: Defense Ammunition Center's Transition to Web-Based Training

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Introduction

The mission of the U.S. Army's Defense Ammunition Center (DAC) is to provide global ammunition support to the Warfighter. The DAC Training Directorate provides ammunition logistics, hazardous materials, and safety-related training for military personnel, Department of Defense civilians, government contractors, and other federal agencies. In 2008, DAC trained more than 44,000 students with a variety of educational arrangements, including on-site, off-site, and Web-based training.

Transition to Web-Based Training

In 1999, all of DAC's training was delivered via classroom instruction and a total of 5,164 personnel received training (see Figure 1). In an attempt to increase their training capacity, DAC has been transitioning from strictly classroom instruction to a combination of classroom and Web-based training. In 2000, DAC began converting some of their classroom courses to CD-ROM training to provide training anytime and anywhere. However, one of the pitfalls of CD-ROMs was that when the material became obsolete, it was costly and time consuming to publish new discs and to recall all of the old discs. This made it challenging to ensure that trainees accessed the most recent version of the course. Thus, DAC quickly realized that the CD-ROM was not the optimal solution for providing trainees with up-to-date and just-in-time ammunition and safety training.

In 2004, DAC acquired SumTotal™ as its learning management system. With assistance from ADL, they began transitioning their materials to Web-based training. As shown in Figure 1, the move to Web-based training has dramatically increased the throughput of trainees. Specifically, the number of people trained by DAC increased 800% from 1999 to 2008 and in 2008 more than 80% of their training was delivered via Web-based instruction. Additionally, conducting the majority of training online has made it more cost effective to deliver training to individuals distributed around the globe.

Furthermore, by making ammunition and safety training available anytime and anywhere, Web-based training facilitates unit readiness by reducing the number of Warfighters who are unprepared for new collateral duties or who would otherwise need to travel to participate in training. Moving to online instruction increased the number of individuals receiving training from DAC by making "virtual" training seats available to anyone. Those who need courses such as Lightning Protection, Naval Motor Vehicle Inspection, or Army Explosives Safety can receive it when they need it, rather than waiting until the schoolhouse has the space to seat them. Having qualified personnel is one of the key determinants of unit readiness and is facilitated by ADL's mission to assist the services in transitioning to technology-delivered instruction.

Figure 1. Number of people trained at DAC with classroom instruction, CD-ROM, and Web-based training from 1999 to 2008.